

**Adriana Georgescu**

**In the  
Beginning  
Was  
the End**



Memoria  
Cultural  
Foundation





"Adriana Georgescu is a symbol of the obstinacy with which Romanian students and youth in general defied the Soviet occupation after the war. Near Mihai Fărcașanu's unmistakable silhouette leading the Liberal Youth demonstration, and inseparable from it, was Adriana's golden hair, athletic slenderness, confident laugh. Newspaperwoman, very young attorney, just out of the University, then General Rădescu's Chief of staff, the anti-communist resistance found in her an emblematic figure. She also became one of the first sacrificial victims of the first show trial in the long series that Nicolschi imposed upon Romania, a series that was to lead to the unfinished symphony of horror at Pitești."

- Monica Lovinescu, essayist and literary critic, Paris, 1991

"I have read *In the Beginning Was the End* with great pleasure and profit. It is an extremely valuable and original exposition of conditions of the time. It offers insight into the atmosphere of those years and into the new order of things from the personal perspective of a sensitive observer and participant."

- Keith Hitchins, Professor of History,

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003

"Adriana Georgescu's defiance in the face of Communist repression is testimony to the courage shown by a number of her generation and a stark reminder of the abandonment by the West of those who strove to uphold the very democratic principles for which the Second World War had been fought. Once cannot read this moving account without a sense that Romania's return to the democratic fold is a vindication of Adriana Georgescu's stand."

- Dennis Deletant, Professor of Romanian Studies,

School of Slavonic and East European Studies

University College London, 2003

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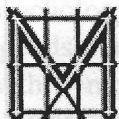
Introduction by *Monica Lovinescu*

Translated from Romanian by

*Dr. Dan Golopenția*

Edited by *Guy and Lidia Bradley*

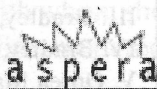
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## **A NOTE ABOUT THE ENGLISH EDITION**

This English edition of Adriana Georgescu's book, "In the Beginning Was the End", was created as part of the Romanian Oral History Project supported by the Aspera Foundation, and hosted on the Internet at [www.memoria.ro](http://www.memoria.ro).

It is an eye-witness account of the communists' rapid takeover of Romania at the end of World War II and of the workings of Stalinist-type propaganda, a victim's rendition of the first show trial of that period, a memoir of years spent in communist prisons (1945 – 1947), and a tale of escape and exile. To our knowledge, this book, written in 1949 - 1950, was the first to describe the mechanisms by which the Communists effectively destroyed the other political parties and Romanian civil society in the years after the war, as a prerequisite to establishing the Soviet-supported totalitarian rule that lasted in Romania until the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in December of 1989. This description is done by a lucid observer who was not only at the center of events, but, trained as a lawyer and journalist, was also politically sophisticated.

It was also the first book to describe the treatment of political prisoners in the Romanian Gulag. The fate of victims of the early communist repression is portrayed in clear, vivid lines. So is the inhumanity of their interrogators. And yet, in writing about prison life, the author, then a young woman in her twenties, transcends the horrors and finds at times a fresh, even humorous tone. The psychology and language of the common criminals with whom she spends time in squalid, over-crowded cells come to life, rendered with sympathy and warmth.

Adriana Georgescu wrote "In the Beginning Was the End" in Paris directly after her escape from Romania in 1948, with the in-

tention of “opening the eyes” of Westerners as to what was going on behind the Iron Curtain. Monica Lovinescu<sup>1</sup> translated it into French while it was being written. The French edition of “*Au commencement était la fin*” was published by Hachette in 1951. Forty years later, when, after the fall of communism, the book could finally be published in Romania, it had to be translated into Romanian from French. Humanitas published a first edition in 1992, and a second edition followed in 1999 under the supervision of Micaela Ghițescu of the Memoria Cultural Foundation. The present translation into English by Dr. Dan Golopenția, with input from Guy Bradley, follows the 1999 edition of the Romanian text.

Growing up in Romania in the sixties, hearing one version of history from my parents and being taught a different one in school, I started wondering how the regime change from a constitutional monarchy to a communist dictatorship actually occurred. I must have been about twelve years old when I first heard, from my parents, whispered accounts of Adriana Georgescu’s suffering. My father was related to her, and I have fond memories of her mother and sisters, whom we used to visit at Sinaia and in Bucharest. However, even the child I was then could sense, underlying their warmth and friendliness, suffering and fear. After leaving Romania in the early 1980s I was often asked to explain to foreign friends how Romanian communism came to develop its extremely dictatorial form. Presenting Adriana Georgescu’s account in English is the best answer I can give.

I met Adriana in 2001 in England. At over eighty, and in spite of the continually recurring depressions she has suffered as a result of her years of torture and imprisonment, her energy shines through her eyes, it resounds in her voice. She has never stopped denouncing totalitarianism: of characters like hers the stuff of resistance to tyranny and manipulation is made. Her book is relevant today, and will be relevant at every point in history when ideology prevails over civil liberties.

This edition benefits from the research of the Institute of Recent Romanian History (IRIR), whose historians Marius Oprea and Stejarel Olaru created and edited the explanatory notes; from the research of the Memoria Cultural Foundation, which allowed us to use the maps of Romania showing the locations of prisons and areas



of activity of post-war resistance groups; from the generous advice of Professor Sanda Golopenția of Brown University; from the thoughtful assistance of Mircea Ivănoiu of the Aspera ProEdu Foundation in Brasov and the technical help of Simona Ceașu, who typed the translated manuscript.

*Lidia Gheorghiu Bradley,*  
The Aspera Foundation, Boston

September 27, 2003

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> *Monica Lovinescu* (b. November 19th, 1923, in Bucharest): literary critic, writer, essayist and radio analyst living in Paris since 1947. A strong voice of the Romanian exile and a harsh critic of the communist regime, she contributed for decades to Radio Free Europe broadcasts. In the 1980's the Romanian political police *Securitate* tried to assassinate her.





## INTRODUCTION

I met Adriana Georgescu again in April 1990 in University Square in Bucharest. I knew that she was now living on the other side of the Channel in a British town. That she had changed her name, after a new marriage, to Westwater. That her appearance had been changed not only by the passing of time but also by the incurable trauma of her prison experience. I had followed year after year her evolution and her tragedy. Still she seemed to belong amidst the youth here. When they sang with humour – a humour pierced by bullets – the “*golanilor*” anthem<sup>1</sup>. And then, kneeling, when they picked up another refrain, “Oh Lord, please come Lord, to see what is left of the humans”. Between the lyrical-revolutionary illusion of the beginning and the disconsolate premonition of the end was Adriana’s real place.

Adriana Georgescu was a symbol of the obstinacy with which Romanian students and youth in general defied the Soviet occupation after the war. Near Mihai Fărcășanu’s<sup>2</sup> unmistakable silhouette leading the Liberal Youth demonstrations, and inseparable from it, was Adriana’s golden hair, athletic slenderness, confident laugh. Newspaperwoman, very young attorney, just out of the University, then General Rădescu’s<sup>3</sup> chief of staff, the anti-communist resistance found in her an emblematic figure. She was also to become one of the first sacrificial victims of the first show trial in the long series that Nicolschi<sup>4</sup> imposed upon Romania, a series that was to lead to the unfinished symphony of horror at Pitești<sup>5</sup>. That diabolical stage hadn’t yet been reached, but even these initial exercises had been enough to change Adriana’s whole existence, henceforth accompanying all the stages of her life with their unending nightmare.

When we met in Paris at the end of 1948, despite what she had been through, Adriana seemed unchanged. She was still General Rădescu's Chief of Staff, stopping here on the road of exile that was to take him to the United States. Adriana could still laugh as well as before, she hadn't given up hope. Of course it was also true that all of us, students or recent graduates, in Paris in sufficient numbers to turn Boulevard St. Michel into a sort of Calea Victoriei away from Romania, we all shared the same recklessness of our age. I only knew one exception: Virgil Ierunca<sup>6</sup>. He walked among us actively pessimistic and was the only one whom I never heard using at New Year or other holidays the ritual formula, "Next year in Bucharest". I myself had come to Paris with the firm belief that Malraux<sup>7</sup> could be convinced to set up international brigades to free Romania.

But I had come to a Paris that was convalescing after one war and unable to prepare for another, and I was among Marxists, Marxist sympathizers, communists, and other fellow travellers for whom Moscow was an anti-fascist Mecca. Among the representatives of the Great Powers who made up the Nüremberg Tribunal, the representatives of the Gulag were trying the heads of the Nazi concentration camps.

One couldn't talk about the satellite-ization of the East without being labeled a fascist. Our stubborn refusal to admit to the division of Europe and the flagrant injustice of the peace was not dulled by aggressive contact with reality. We printed newspapers, we agitated, we held meetings, we knocked on all the doors, we wanted to open eyes that had chosen to remain closed. Such an out-of-sync attitude cannot be explained only by our youth. A very mature Grigore Gafencu<sup>8</sup> did the same thing at a different level. In the United States Committees of the Captive Nations were formed – we even had two, one led by C. Vișoianu<sup>9</sup>, the other by General Rădescu and Mihai Fărcășanu. The legitimacy of regimes that came to power in falsified elections seemed easy to challenge.

The word exile is actually misleading: there are a number of very different types of exiles. Ours was mainly made up of people who had run not to escape, but rather to continue fighting.

And we kept fighting. Without weapons, without those tanks in which we still dreamed of returning to Romania. We fought with

our pens, with our words. Only in 1956, when we saw in amazement that the bloody suppression of the Hungarian Revolution took place without any reaction from the Western Powers (a single United Nations plane carrying the General Secretary of the UN to the Budapest airport, in answer to Imre Nagy's<sup>10</sup> desperate call, would have probably been enough to stop the slaughter and to change the course of history), only then did we realize that our wish was in vain. And since then there have been many types of exiles. The ones determined to continue – true courage, said Simone Weil, is to fight when there is no hope – did it, each in his own way, living their life as a hiatus between what was, and what had almost no chance of coming into being. Others more or less adapted. Others assimilated. And in the waves of exile that followed some were strictly “economical”. Seldom “political”. In 1956 there occurred the first great loss from the first great exile: Grigore Gafencu, while coming back from a radio station where he had launched a last appeal to save a revolution which could have spread beyond Hungary's borders, was brought down by a heart attack.

But it wasn't yet 1956 when I saw Adriana again in Paris. We still lived with the conviction that eyes must be opened. In the cafés of St. Germain-des-Près, instead of talking about existentialism and looking for Sartre and his cohorts, we came up with a strategy. Adriana would write an eyewitness account, and I would translate it into French. The sooner the better. The urgency was measured by the number of prisons that were filling up in Romania. We agreed that she would bring me every day what she had written the previous night. When she didn't have time the night before, she would write at my house and I would translate it on the spot. “My house” was in fact an attic room (“chambre de bonne” the French call it), the kind poor Parisian students had in those days. And for the first time in my life I was quite poor. But I admit I didn't completely dislike this bohemian lifestyle, which I hadn't known in Romania: university eating halls, rooms without running water, unlit staircases.

There, at 44 Boulevard Raspail, Adriana climbed daily to the seventh floor, and of course there was no lift. Sometimes with three or four pages written in a hurry, sometimes without any so she had to write while I prepared something to eat. Because Romania had



broken cultural ties with France we were left without stipends and had only minimal student aid. I didn't really know how to behave when one is left with nothing, but for some reason poverty was connected in my mind with *mămăligă*<sup>11</sup>. So we looked in all sorts of specialty stores for corn flour, which was rather expensive in those days, out of which, I due to my ignorance, Adriana due to her extreme concentration on the manuscript, we made a rather poor *mămăligă*. We ended up with some lumpy stuff which we complemented with American chocolate. Various American charitable associations sent food and second hand clothing parcels for East European refugees. They shipped it all together so that our chocolate smelled of... moth balls. We smoked and we drank, Adriana tea and I coffee. And we worked.

When she left, usually late, down the unlit staircase, Adriana sometimes dropped the pages that had been translated, or threw them crumpled into the waste-paper basket. They weren't very important to her, she wrote with a single goal in mind: "to open eyes". During our breaks we behaved childishly or even ridiculously: we put Romanian words to the French Partisan song and imagined ourselves in the first battalions that would throw open the prison doors. We projected the obsessive, in those years, images of the French resistance onto the Romanian reality. And after an intermezzo of hallucinations we would start again: she to write, I to translate.

When she got to her first experiences with prison and torture, Adriana put her fountain-pen down. Her whole body started to tremble. Her teeth were chattering. (This trembling has accompanied her throughout her life, it has been her eternal present.) I gave her another cup of tea. I opened the window that looked out over the Paris roofs. But she was still in the darkness of the Bucharest prisons. Before starting to write again, she told me, still trembling, all the things that she couldn't put down on paper. Then gradually she calmed down and wrote, torturously, sparsely, allusively about the unnamable. She threw those pages into the fire immediately after I had translated them into French, seemingly believing that by burning them she could also consume her past. The paper turned into ash but her burden remained.

But even among her prison memories were episodes that were not tragic. She remembered with humour and tender emotion her prostitute and thief cellmates. In order to translate Romanian slang into French, a friend introduced me to one of his resistance comrades who talked only in argot. Plain, massive, primeval even, seemingly still holding in his hand the machine gun which he hadn't yet completely set aside (he told me he kept his weapons hidden under his bed), a simple and courageous man – he had also been behind bars for honourable reasons – he told me everything he knew. Thanks to him the Dâmbovița<sup>12</sup> felons, thieves, and prostitutes were able to talk just like those on the shores of Seine. A single word remained unchanged: “rag” – the friendly way Adriana's prison-mates called her. I remember it because Adriana and I adopted this name and used it later in our conversations, and after her departure for England in our mail. Never “dear Adriana” or “dear Monica”. We used “rag” instead as a sort of a link – unconscious? – between what we were hoping for then and what was never going to happen.

Adriana busied herself not only with the writing of the book, finished in record time due to our rhythm and working style. She was always active. As a member of the Liberal Party. As Rădescu's secretary. She made things clear to politicians, newspapermen, she went to meetings, she kept talking, she kept talking. At the trial brought by the heads of the democratic parties from East and Central Europe against the communist author of a book that was making waves in those days, “*L'Internationale des Traîtres*”, Adriana, in her deposition, warned the West that if it failed to do something for the “other Europe” it would eventually be faced with neurotic societies. Her prophecy, based in part on her own suffering, was confirmed by the state of Romanian society after 1989.

The book was published by Hachette in 1951. I signed the translation with a pseudonym (Claude Pascal). I had a hostage in Romania: my mother. In spite of this she was arrested in 1958, at the age of 70, sentenced to 25 years, and in the end murdered in prison through the denial of medical care. Not, however, because my pen name was deciphered, but absurdly (and what wasn't absurd in communist Romania?) for “espionage”. How? By sending me

printed silk scarves on which she supposedly drew... military maps. Needless to say, my mother didn't know how to draw maps and I never received any scarves from her.

Despite the leftist milieu, *Au commencement était la fin* was favourably received in the French press. Adriana assumed that the Romanian Embassy bought the whole edition so that the book wouldn't reach the public. I don't know if this was the case, totally or partially, although such "mass purchases" were used by the communists at the time. In any case the whole edition sold out.

What is left to say is why I think the publication in Romania of Adriana Georgescu's book is salutary and of current interest. Salutary because we suffer, and are going to suffer for a long time, from Romania's image in the media as the Eastern European country with the weakest dissident movement. And, with a few well-known exceptions, this is a fairly accurate description of the last decades. But not of the first decades after the war. The resistance movement in Romania after 1944 was probably more numerous, more unified, and more determined than that in neighbouring countries. And longer lasting. In September 1947 in Vienna, after I had clandestinely crossed a border (even though my passport was in order... but that is another story that I am not going to tell here), I was in the office of a French officer in order to get a new visa in my passport already filled with stamps. Behind his desk there was a huge map of Romania with small flags marking the resistance bases in the Carpathian mountains. The officer wanted to know if I was aware of any other resistance centers. I wasn't. I was aware though of the resistance that was more or less open in society ("civil society" we would call it today; and it existed in those days).

I was the delegate of the Literature Department of the University of Bucharest to a large student congress in May 1947 in Cluj. The communists and the various "fronts" behind which they were hiding wanted to force us to stigmatize and "fire" the professors resistant to the new order. We withstood the pressure so well (universities from the whole country were represented) that the congress ended without any positive results for the communists and with the Royal Anthem being sung in a large hall filled with students. I was lodged in the medical student dormitory, and we plotted in long sleepless nights what tactics to follow. Among the intel-

lectuals there was the same determined attitude. Together with Ștefan Augustin Doinaș<sup>13</sup> and other members of the Sibiu circle<sup>14</sup> we went to see Lucian Blaga<sup>15</sup>. Blaga wanted to know details about how the Bucharest writers and university professors were surviving. His long periods of silence were punctuated by anxiety and determination. "Silent as a swan", Blaga was listening to the future.

I think this initial resistance has to be emphasized in order to re-establish the truth, to honour those who are no longer with us, and to rid ourselves of one of our rare undeserved complexes (so many are justified!).

As far as the current interest of this testimony goes... I assume it isn't necessary to dwell on it. The readers will judge for themselves. For me it was enough to meet Adriana again in University Square in 1990.

There are some essential differences though.

In 1945 we had a civil society, but also the Red Army, in a land abandoned to Soviet "influence". In 1989-1990, the society, with a few well-known and wonderful exceptions, seems ill, "neurotic", Adriana would say. On the other hand, Europe is no longer divided, and the Red Army is busy at home.

In 1945 everything depended on foreigners. Now everything is in our hands. In principle, there is no reason for the beginning to be the end.

Monica Lovinescu  
Paris, March 1991

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Golan* (pl. *golani*): literally, a 'have-not', a 'vagabond'. After 1990, when President Ion Iliescu, a former high-ranking communist leader, called the students and intellectuals protesting against his government in University Square *golani*, the term acquired a positive connotation, even becoming a badge of honor. President Iliescu later



apologized publicly. Two young folk singers, Cristian Pațurcă and Petre Constantin, known as "Dr. Barbi", composed the so-called '*golanilor* anthem', which was sung by the thousands of protesters in the square. Its refrain was "Better to be a vagabond than a traitor / A hooligan than a dictator / Better to be a have-not than a party activist / Better to be dead than a communist." Many well-known Romanian intellectuals, including Alexandru Paleologu, a writer and Romania's Ambassador to Paris at that time, declared themselves to be '*golani*'.

<sup>2</sup> *Mihai Fărcășanu* (?-1987): charismatic president of the Romanian Liberal Youth Organisation, writer (pen name: Mihai Villara) and journalist (Editor in Chief of *Viitorul*, official newspaper of the National Liberal Party), escaped Romania in 1947 and took refuge in France and then in the United States, where he was a founding member of the Romanian National Committee and then succeeded General Nicolae Rădescu as President of the League of Free Romanians.

<sup>3</sup> *Nicolae Rădescu* (1876-1953): general, Chief of the Great General Staff until October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Prime Minister between December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 and February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945. He tried to quell the communist agitations, but was forced to resign. He took refuge at the British Legation in Bucharest and, in 1946, managed to fly out of the country to Cyprus. His daring escape surprised even the Allies, who, in order to avoid more tension between them and the Soviets, kept him for nine months on the island in a British refugee camp, before allowing him to emigrate to the United States via Lisbon. In Washington, General Rădescu organized the Romanian National Committee (Comitetul National Roman, CNR) in 1948, under the patronage of Michael I, King of Romania. CNR initially consisted of ten members, representing the three main Romanian democratic parties of the interwar period: the National Peasant Party, the Liberal Party, and the Independent Socialist Party and acted as a substitute for a post-World War II Romanian democratic government in exile. It was one of the nine organizations that made up the Assembly of Captive European Nations. After leaving CNR in 1950, due to policy conflicts, General Rădescu founded the League of Free Romanians. He was head of this organization for only a short time, since in 1952 he developed an illness of the lungs that could not be diagnosed. He died one year later, on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1953, in New York.

<sup>4</sup> *Alexandru Nicolschi* (1914-1992): KGB officer. After Romania was occupied by the Red Army in 1944, he was charged with arresting the leaders of the democratic parties. He rose to the rank of general and became deputy director of the *Securitate*. He was in charge

of special operations of the *Securitate* against political opponents, and directly responsible for the crimes and torture carried out by the communist political police during the first ten years of its existence, participating in person at interrogations considered 'of importance'. It is therefore significant that he personally and savagely tortured Adriana Georgescu, General Rădescu's former chief of staff. Retired in 1961 as a major general. After the 1989 revolution he 'justified' his crimes by saying: "Who knew that 1989 was ever going to happen?". He died on the very day when, after long delays, the Romanian authorities, pressured by the civil society, decided to prosecute him.

<sup>5</sup> *Pitești Prison*: best known political prison in Romania. It was the location of the Pitești Experiment, a process to 'reeducate' political detainees. Of unparalleled cruelty, it was basically brainwashing by torture. The experiment took place under great secrecy between 1949-1952 in a number of Romanian prisons, but was perfected at Pitești. The *Securitate* presented it as an initiative of the detainees themselves, most of whom were students and members of right-wing parties. Beaten and starved, then tempted with promises of freedom and jobs, a few of the detainees were convinced to torture their cellmates, in order to 'reeducate' them and turn them into useful builders of the communist society. The result: 30 detainees were killed, more than 780 tortured, out of which 100 were left with great infirmities; some committed suicide in order to escape torture, and others went mad.

<sup>6</sup> *Virgil Ierunca* (b.1920): real name Virgil Untaru, Romanian literary critic, writer and publicist living in France since 1947. Ierunca has been one of the harshest critics of the Romanian communist regime. The *Securitate* tried to assassinate him.

<sup>7</sup> *André Malraux* (1901-1976): French writer and politician.

<sup>8</sup> *Grigore Gafencu* (1892-1957): studied law in Geneva and obtained his doctorate in Paris. Member of the National Peasant Party, Romanian Foreign Minister between 1938-1940, later founding member of the Romanian National Committee (Comitetul National Roman, CNR) together with General Nicolae Rădescu and eight other politicians and diplomats.

<sup>9</sup> *Constantin Vișoianu* (1897-1994): former Romanian Foreign Minister appointed at Titulescu's recommendation as a member of the General Secretariat of the League of Nations in Geneva, ex-minister to Hague and Warsaw, ex-foreign policy counsellor of Iuliu Maniu, participant in the secret negotiations with the Allies in Cairo in 1944. Went into exile in 1946 aided by the American Legation in Bucharest. Led the Romanian National Committee until its dissolution

in 1975. Represented Romania at the Meeting of the European Captive Nations in Strasbourg.

<sup>10</sup> *Imre Nagy* (1896-1958): Hungarian Prime Minister between 1953-55. During the anticommunist uprising of 1956, which he had initiated through his political reforms and his attempt to take Hungary out of the Soviet zone of influence and the Warsaw Pact, he was called back to lead the country. After he was removed from power by the Soviet troops, the communist authorities in Bucharest offered him political asylum at the suggestion of the Soviets. Once he entered Romania, he was arrested and interrogated by Soviet agents at a secret Securitate location. He was then sent back to Hungary, where he was tried as a traitor to the communist cause, sentenced to death and executed.

<sup>11</sup> *mămăligă*: Romanian word for polenta or maize porridge, a peasant staple. In communist Romania, *mămăligă* also became a symbol of the control exercised by the state over the population: "*Mămăliga nu explodează*" or "Polenta doesn't explode" was a phrase that, in the '80s, was often used to describe the resignation of Romanians to their fate under communism. The phrase began to become invalid on November 15th, 1987, when workers in Braşov openly demanded the end of the Ceauşescu regime, and then finally became obsolete through the revolution of 1989, which removed Ceauşescu from power.

<sup>12</sup> *Dâmboviţa*: river in southern Romania, 268 km long, running through Bucharest.

<sup>13</sup> *Ştefan Augustin Doinaş* (1922-2002): real name Ştefan Popa, Romanian poet and academician. Between 1996 – 2000 he represented the Civic Alliance Party, the political party of Romanian intellectuals, in the Senate.

<sup>14</sup> *Sibiu Literary Circle*: founded after the Romanian University at Cluj was moved to Sibiu as a result of the Vienna Dictate (1940), which ceded the northern part of Transylvania to Hungary. One of the most fruitful cultural organizations in Transylvania.

<sup>15</sup> *Lucian Blaga* (1895-1961): Romanian poet, playwright and philosopher. Marginalized by the communist regime, who kept him under constant surveillance, as proven by documents recently published by his daughter. After his death first his poems, then his philosophical writings were reissued.







## PART ONE

"In the beginning was the end"

### DEDICATION

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I dedicate this book to all Romanians who, during the forty years of communist bondage, were persecuted, arrested, tortured and unjustly sentenced to long years in prison.

*Adriana Georgescu*

I have just learned the news that my colleagues want to celebrate the event by having a party on my birthday. I turn them down: I am on duty at the hospital. I must go down the stairs. A colleague catches up with me and says, "Please give me your permit."

I give it to him. I seldom see him now with me. My university friends are much more preoccupied about money than I am. I only go once a week, to do my shopping. When one works in a hos-

\* (*Unepistola Literara* - Literary Epistle) - a book published during the 1980s year, which contains the letters and the correspondence of the author, and the letters and the correspondence of the author.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Because this book was written during the Stalinist period, the names of certain people and localities were changed, making it impossible for the communist police to identify, harass and arrest the people with whom I was in contact.

## PART ONE

### “In the beginning was the end”

#### I

In July, 1943 a small incident, apparently of no importance, changed my whole life. I was twenty-three and until then my life had followed a quiet course in the direction I wanted it to take, in the exact direction I thought I could give it.

I wanted to be a lawyer, and I had just graduated. I wanted to do sports, and I had already taken part in a few national championships in volleyball and table tennis. I wanted to be a journalist, and for the last year I had written the movie column for *Universul Literar*<sup>1</sup>. I was also a nurse in a military hospital.

Then, in July, 1943, on the very day of the graduation exam, it all started. It must have been on a Friday...

I have just learned the result of the exam. My colleagues want to celebrate the event by inviting me out for dinner. I turn them down: I am on duty at the hospital. I leave them and go down the stairs. A colleague catches up to me: „Adriana, please give me your permit.”

I give it to him. I seldom have the permit with me. My university friends are much more passionate about movies than I am. I only go once a week, to do my column. When one works in a hos-

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<sup>1</sup> *Universul Literar* : literary magazine that, during the WWII years, invited contributions from writers and intellectuals irrespective of their political position.



pital, one sees too many dead, too many wounded. And the movies in Bucharest are almost exclusively German...



Night shift at the hospital. Duty in the ward of those near death. In every bed the same closed eyes, the same gasping breath, the same cracked lips that open only to ask for water, and for water again.

At one a.m. another nurse comes to relieve me. I have to go to the operating room. Three operations. The drone of the planes in the sky above the hospital is drowned in the smell of chloroform, in the metallic clatter of the shiny instruments the assistants pass to the chief surgeon, in the sound of gasping breaths that dominate the night as it slowly passes away.



At six in the morning we accompany the chief surgeon to the car that waits in front of the entrance. The crisp air of the morning burns my eyes. In the emergency room a doctor is helping me with my coat, when Gheorghe, a colleague from the newspaper, appears.

– I have to talk to you immediately.

At this hour? What must have happened for Gheorghe to come to the hospital at such an hour?

– You can talk in front of the doctor, he is a childhood friend.

– Grab your purse and come right away. I have to talk to you alone. It's secret.

I take my purse and follow him. Before I leave I tell the doctor:

– I'll be back shortly.

– No, you are not going to come back, says Gheorghe, once the door is closed. They are looking for you... *Siguranța*<sup>2</sup>. Don't be so surprised. The censors have warned you a few times. You should

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<sup>2</sup> *Siguranța*: Security and information service within the Police and General Security Directorate of the Romanian Interior Ministry. Abolished by the communist regime in 1948, when it was replaced by the General Directorate of the People's Security (later known as the *Securitate*), based on the Soviet NKVD. Between 1945-1948, communist agents who had infiltrated *Siguranța* acted as a political police force against the democratically oriented political groups and individuals.

have laid low. Why did you have to be so critical of the German movies? The censors agreed to only seven lines from your last column.

– I wrote what I thought.

– The result: police came looking for you at the paper and at home. They are waiting for you at both places.

He seems scared. My legs feel rubbery.

– I'll go say good-bye to the doctor and the nurse.

– Are you crazy? They'll come looking for you here as well. Outside there is a car waiting. You must leave immediately. I always thought you were irresponsible.

I shrug.

– Where do you want me to go?

– We are going to hide you; this is not the moment for conversation. Let's leave before the police get here.

He grabs my hand and pulls me after him. I add:

– You think it's that bad?

Gheorghe stops and says, furiously:

– Listen, you have to decide. Do you want to disappear, or would you rather pay a little visit to the Gestapo?

The idea of the Gestapo scares me. I follow Gheorghe, running without another word. A car is waiting downstairs. Speeding through the city. Grey dawn.

## II

I don't understand what's happening. I have become a brunette. I have false papers and live in Câmpulung<sup>3</sup>. Gheorghe didn't lie. Before reaching Câmpulung I almost fainted from fear a few times. And I used to hate detective stories... I live in a house in a town I don't know. A provincial town, nice and peaceful. A house where I don't feel at home. At least I didn't in the beginning. Now I am getting used to it.

I share a room with a young woman my age, a Jew named Coca. She is also hiding. In another room, four men. In the living room, the owners, Sandu and Jana. Sandu belongs to a resistance group, he is the organizer. After eight at night the house is quiet. We listen to BBC and Voice of America. Jana records the Allied communiqués in shorthand. Afterwards we duplicate them on the linotype. The front gets closer and closer.

On the streets of Câmpulung the Nazi soldiers pass in disarray. At night the four men distribute the leaflets. One of the men, Tudor, has a car. Coca always sits in the car next to the driver. Everybody is happy. I have trouble fitting in. Jana thinks I take too seriously the fact that the police are after me. Maybe she is right.

Still, I am very much afraid, but I don't show it too much. I can't get used at all to the young brunette with my features whom I see in the mirror. To the false papers, in the name of Johanna Müller, even less. A hundred times a day I repeat this name which should be mine. I try to tame it, to make it mine.

Often I think of the hospital that I had to leave so suddenly. Was it bombed? For the last few months Bucharest has been bombed

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<sup>3</sup> Câmpulung: small town on the slopes of the Southern Carpathian Mountains, ca. 160 km north-west of Bucharest.

almost daily by British and American planes. I am not allowed to send letters.



My fellow inmates admire me for attacking the Nazis. I tell them again and again that there was nothing admirable about it. I simply found the Nazi movies, with their slogans, their buzz-words, their racist ferocity, odious and I said that. That was all. Sandu and the men think I will be a political star tomorrow. I know they are wrong. I try to convince them, but in vain. I have never been involved in politics. I only know that I hate the war, this nightmare with which we all struggle.



I turn twenty-four on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1944. The first year that nobody wishes me happy birthday. A day like any other, like all the others in the year I have been living in this house. The same frantic, slightly disorganized activity. The men found an abandoned German truck filled with white paper. We are printing twice as many leaflets as before. Tonight, American planes passed over Câmpulung on their way to Bucharest. It was the only noteworthy thing today.



The days are the same, always the same. The town is animated and filled with excitement. The front is getting closer to our borders. I am in a state of uneasy peace, like a body of water regularly agitated by winds. Trapped in this tiresome waiting... I can't think straight.



No more night rides in the car. For camouflage we turn off all the lights after ten. We go to bed early and wake up at four in the morning to listen to the communiqués. All the alarm clocks in the house start ringing madly at a quarter to four. I wake up feeling uneasy every time.

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The author also wishes to pay tribute to her late husband, Frank Lorimer Westwater (1909-1969), captain and instructor in H.M. British Navy. Two of the ships on which Captain Westwater served during WWII were sunk by the enemy; the first time he was the only surviving senior officer, being saved by a passing ship in the Atlantic, the second time he was found, almost dead from exposure, on the shores of Gibraltar. He received numerous awards (Star, Atlantic Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, and, in 1954, the Order of the British Empire). F.L. Westwater studied mathematics at the Universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge, and worked as a scientist and researcher in Sir Fred Hoyle's team at the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy at Cambridge University. He is the author of four books published by English University Press.